98th Congress
1st Session

JOINT COMMITTEE PRINT

S. PRT.
98-72

TOTAL WEEKS OF UNEMPLOYMENT: A NEW MEASURE OF LABOR MARKET DISTRESS

A STAFF STUDY

PREPARED FOR THE USE OF THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GOALS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICY

OF THE

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 20, 1983

Printed for the use of the Joint Economic Committee

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

22-188 O

WASHINGTON : 1983

J 842-19

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

[Created pursuant to sec. 5(a) of Public Law 304, 79th Congress]

SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ROGER W. JEPSEN, Iowa, *Chairman*	LEE H. HAMILTON, Indiana, *Vice Chairman*
WILLIAM V. ROTH, JR., Delaware	GILLIS W. LONG, Louisiana
JAMES ABDNOR, South Dakota	PARREN J. MITCHELL, Maryland
STEVEN D. SYMMS, Idaho	AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS, California
MACK MATTINGLY, Georgia	DAVID R. OBEY, Wisconsin
ALFONSE M. D'AMATO, New York	JAMES H. SCHEUER, New York
LLOYD BENTSEN, Texas	CHALMERS P. WYLIE. Ohio
WILLIAM PROXMIRE, Wisconsin	MARJORIE S. HOLT, Maryland
EDWARD M. KENNEDY, Massachusetts	DAN LUNGREN, California
PAUL S. SARBANES, Maryland	OLYMPIA J. SNOWE, Maine

BRUCE R. BARTLETT, *Executive Director*
JAMES K. GALBRAITH, *Deputy Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC GOALS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	SENATE
LEE H. HAMILTON, Indiana, *Chairman*	LLOYD BENTSEN, Texas, *Vice Chairman*
AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS, California	ROGER W. JEPSEN, Iowa
OLYMPIA J. SNOWE, Maine	ALFONSE M. D'AMATO, New York

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

JUNE 20, 1983.

Hon. ROGER W. JEPSEN,
Chairman, Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am pleased to transmit herewith a staff study entitled "Total Weeks of Unemployment: A New Measure of Labor Market Distress." The study was prepared by Dr. Paul B. Manchester, a Joint Economic Committee staff economist.

In this study total weeks of unemployment, the product of the number unemployed and the mean duration of unemployment, is developed as a new labor market indicator. Despite the decline of 844,000 in the number of unemployed between December 1982 and May 1983, total weeks of unemployment rose, due to an increase in the average length of unemployment from 18 weeks in December to a record 20.4 weeks in May. Persons unemployed last month had been out of work for a total of 228.3 million weeks, a record level. Since the start of this recession in July 1981, the number of unemployed has risen by 43 percent, but total weeks of unemployment have more than doubled, due to a sharp increase in the duration of unemployment.

Traditional measures such as the unemployment rate and the number unemployed fail to consider the length of the period of joblessness. Clearly someone out of work for 1 year is subject to much greater hardship than someone out of work for 1 week. The Labor Department does provide measures of the average length of unemployment, but these are presented separately from the information on the extent of unemployment. We currently have two separate one-dimensional indicators of our unemployment problem; the new measure proposed in this study combines the extent of unemployment and the duration of unemployment to present a full two-dimensional picture of the severity of the situation.

Detailed comparisons of the shares of the unemployment burden borne by various demographic groups using this new measure and traditional alternatives are made in this study. In 1982 black males, blue-collar workers, and persons formerly employed in manufacturing and construction experienced longer than average periods of unemployment in addition to their above average rates of unemployment. Thus, the shares of total weeks of unemployment borne by these groups greatly exceeded their shares of the labor force. The study concludes with an analysis of the cyclical record of this new measure and a comparison with alternative indicators.

The views expressed in the staff study are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent my views or the views of any other Member of the Joint Economic Committee.

Sincerely,

LEE H. HAMILTON,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Economic Goals
and Intergovernmental Policy.

CONTENTS

Page

Letter of transmittal III

TOTAL WEEKS OF UNEMPLOYMENT: A NEW MEASURE OF LABOR MARKET DISTRESS

Demographic breakdown 4
Duration of unemployment 7
Cyclical record 8
Related measures 8
Conclusion 9

CHART

Total weeks of unemployment, 1969–83 3

TABLES

1. Measures of unemployment, 1969–83 2
2. Measures of unemployment by race and sex, 1982 5
3. Measures of unemployment by age, 1982 5
4. Measures of unemployment by occupation, 1982 6
5. Measures of unemployment by industry, 1982 6
6. Number unemployed and total weeks of unemployment, by duration of unemployment, May 1983 7

TOTAL WEEKS OF UNEMPLOYMENT: A NEW MEASURE OF LABOR MARKET DISTRESS

By Paul B. Manchester*

The economic, personal, and psychological hardships resulting from unemployment depend not only on the fact of being unemployed, but also on the length of unemployment. The effects of long-term unemployment on the physical and psychological health of the jobless, their dependents, and others fearing loss of employment have been shown to be severe.[1] Unemployment compensation benefits replace only part of workers' lost income, and as time passes increasing numbers of the unemployed receive no benefits, or exhaust their benefit rights. Workers may also suffer depreciation of job skills or habits from extended inactivity. The personal hardships are borne by the unemployed and all those dependent on the unemployed.[2] Social unrest and crime may be exacerbated by extended periods of unemployment.

The loss to the economy from extended unemployment is the value of total output foregone over the entire period of joblessness. The full dimensions of labor market distress reflect both the breadth of unemployment, measured by the number of people unemployed, and the depth of economic hardship, measured by the average duration of unemployment.

Traditional measures such as the number unemployed, the official unemployment rate and the alternative rates prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and "labor force time lost," capture only the current magnitudes of unemployment, not the cumulative damage. Other measures such as the mean, median, and percentage distribution of the duration of unemployment indicate the typical length of joblessness, but fail to show the extent of unemployment. None of the published indicators measures the combined effects of the size of current unemployment and the duration of unemployment.

Total weeks of unemployment is a new measure of labor market distress which combines the effects of a higher level and a longer duration of unemployment. This index equals the number of unemployed multiplied by the mean duration of unemployment. In effect, this measure weights each unemployed worker by the

---

*Economist, Joint Economic Committee. The views expressed in this communication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Joint Economic Committee or its members. I would like to thank Robert Fisher and Gloria Green of the Bureau of Labor Statistics for facilitating the computations underlying this analysis, and James Galbraith and Bill Buechner of the Joint Economic Committee for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this study.

[1] "Estimating the Social Costs of National Economic Policy. Implications for Mental and Physical Health and Criminal Aggression." A study prepared for the use of the Joint Economic Committee, October 26, 1976.

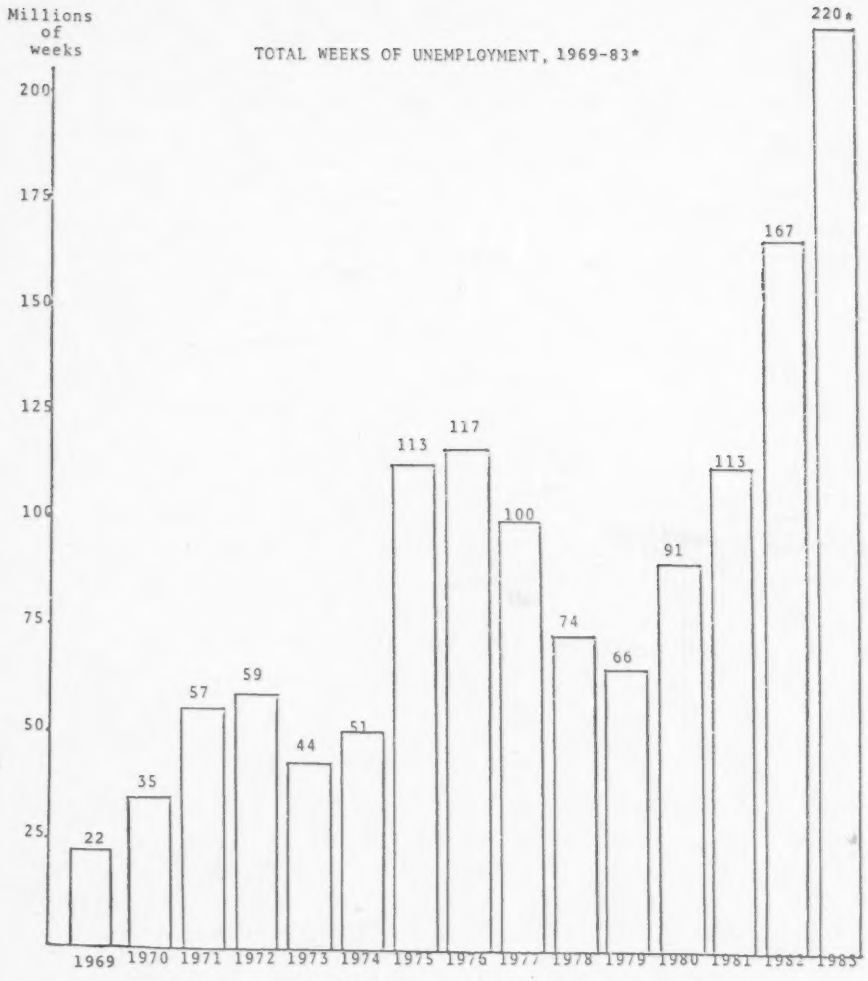
[2] Personal accounts are related in *Employment-Unemployment*. A hearing before the Joint Economic Committee, October 8, 1982.

number of weeks he or she has been out of work. Time series data on total weeks of unemployment are summarized in Table 1 for recent years and months.

TABLE 1.—MEASURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT, 1969–83

Period	Civilian unemployment rate (percent)	Number unemployed by duration of unemployment (thousands)			Mean duration of unemployment (weeks)	Total weeks of unemployment (millions)
		Total	27–51 weeks	52 weeks and over		
1969	3.5	2,832	78	55	7.8	22.1
1970	4.9	4,093	152	83	8.6	35.2
1971	5.9	5,016	342	177	11.3	56.7
1972	5.6	4,882	317	249	12.0	58.6
1973	4.9	4,365	199	144	10.0	43.6
1974	5.6	5,156	240	141	9.8	50.5
1975	8.5	7,929	780	423	14.2	112.6
1976	7.7	7,406	704	644	15.8	117.0
1977	7.1	6,991	523	505	14.3	100.0
1978	6.1	6,202	330	318	11.9	73.8
1979	5.8	6,137	278	257	10.8	66.3
1980	7.1	7,637	491	329	11.9	90.9
1981	7.6	8,273	604	559	13.7	113.3
1982	9.7	10,678	952	825	15.6	166.6
July 1981	7.2	7,854	581	533	14.0	110.0
November 1982	10.7	11,906	1,060	1,063	17.3	206.0
December 1982	10.8	12,036	1,205	1,197	18.0	216.6
January 1983	10.4	11,446	1,320	1,413	19.4	222.1
February 1983	10.4	11,490	1,386	1,446	19.0	218.3
March 1983	10.3	11,381	1,505	1,473	19.1	217.4
April 1983	10.2	11,328	1,457	1,504	19.0	215.2
May 1983	10.1	11,192	1,418	1,548	20.4	228.3

Note.—Monthly data seasonally adjusted, except the numbers unemployed for 27–51 weeks and 52 weeks and over are unadjusted, because they are not published separately on a seasonally adjusted basis.



*Number unemployed (in millions) multiplied by mean duration of unemployment (in weeks). Data for 1983 based on January-May average.

This measure reveals a current labor market picture much worse than that shown by the conventional measures, and one much more severe than the situation in the 1973–75 recession. The current recession, so soon after the 1980 recession, has caused much more labor market distress than many may have believed. In July 1981, at the beginning of this recession, the average length of unemployment for the 7.85 million then unemployed was 14.0 weeks. Thus, the total number of weeks of unemployment was 110 million. In May 1983 the number unemployed was 11.19 million, and the average duration of unemployment was a record 20.4 weeks, yielding a total of 228.3 million weeks of unemployment. Between July 1981 and May 1983 the total number of weeks of unemployment rose by 108 percent, the combined effect of a 43 percent increase in the number of unemployed, and a 46-percent rise in the average length of unemployment. This index reached a record level in May 1983.

The civilian unemployment rate, which reached a 16 year low in 1969, nearly tripled between 1969 and May 1983, rising from 3.5 percent to 10.1 percent. But this greatly understates the rise in labor market distress. The total number of weeks of unemployment rose by 933 percent, the combined effect of a 295 percent rise in the number of unemployed, and a 162 percent increase in the mean duration of unemployment. The number out of work for a year or more rose from 55,000 in 1969 to a record 1.548 million in May 1983.

Demographic Breakdown

Various measures of unemployment in 1982 are compared by race, sex, age, industry, and occupation in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5. As shown in Table 2, the two groups with above average unemployment rates last year, men and black-and-other, also experienced above average mean durations of unemployment, widening overall sex and race discrepancies in labor market distress. Black males were particularly hard hit—they accounted for 7 percent of the civilian labor force, 12 percent of the total number unemployed, and 16 percent of the total weeks of unemployment. White females accounted for 37 percent of the civilian labor force, 32 percent of the total number unemployed, and 26 percent of the total weeks of unemployment. The differences between races will persist even as we move into an economic recovery, though the mean durations of white and black-and-other unemployment (identical in 1972) may move closer together. The differences between sexes will decline if the male unemployment rate falls more rapidly than the female unemployment rate in the recovery. The mean duration of male unemployment exceeded that for females by a record 4.0 weeks in 1982; this gap will shrink, but will be well above the minimum difference of 1.2 weeks which prevailed in 1969.

TABLE 2.—MEASURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY RACE AND SEX, 1982

Race, sex [1]	Civilian unemployment rate (percent)	Civilian labor force (millions)	Number unemployed (millions)	Mean duration of unemployment (weeks)	Total weeks of unemployment (millions)	Group percentage of total		
						Civilian labor force	Number unemployed	Total weeks of unemployment
White:								
Male	8.8	55.133	4.846	16.6	80.4	50	45	48
Female	8.3	41.010	3.395	12.7	43.1	37	32	26
Total	8.6	96.143	8.241	15.0	123.6	87	77	74
Black and other:								
Male	18.2	7.317	1.334	19.8	26.4	7	12	16
Female	16.4	6.745	1.104	15.4	17.0	6	10	10
Total	17.3	14.061	2.437	17.8	43.4	13	23	26
Total male	9.9	62.450	6.179	17.3	106.9	57	58	64
Total female	9.4	47.755	4.499	13.3	59 8	43	42	36
Total	9.7	110.204	10.678	15.6	166.6	100	100	100

[1] In the 1980 Census, 83 percent of the black and other civilian population, 16 years and over, were black; the remainder were primarily American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Unlike race and sex differences, for which higher unemployment rates were exacerbated by longer durations of unemployment, discrepancies between age groups in the rate of unemployment in 1982 were offset to some degree by differences in the mean duration of unemployment, as shown in Table 3. Teenage workers had the highest unemployment rate, but the lowest mean duration of unemployment; they accounted for 8 percent of the civilian labor force, 19 percent of the unemployed, and 12 percent of the total weeks of unemployment. On the other hand, workers 55 and over had the lowest unemployment rate, but the highest mean duration of unemployment; they accounted for 14 percent of the civilian labor force, 7 percent of the unemployed, and 9 percent of the total weeks of unemployment.

TABLE 3.—MEASURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE, 1982

Age	Civilian unemployment rate (percent)	Civilian labor force (millions)	Number unemployed (millions)	Mean duration of unemployment (weeks)	Total weeks of unemployment (millions)	Group percentage of total		
						Civilian labor force	Number unemployed	Total weeks of unemployment
16 to 19	23.2	8.526	1.977	10.4	20.6	8	19	12
20 to 24	14.9	16.081	2.392	14.5	34.7	15	22	21
25 to 34	9.7	31.185	3.037	16.7	50.7	28	28	30
35 to 44	6.9	22.431	1.552	18.0	27.9	20	15	17
45 to 54	5.7	16.889	0.966	18.9	18.3	15	9	11
55 to 64	5.4	12.062	0.647	19.5	12.6	11	6	8
65 and over	3.5	3.030	0.107	17.0	1.8	3	1	1
Total	9.7	110.204	10.678	15.6	166.6	100	100	100

The occupational and industrial breakdowns in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that those groups with above average unemployment rates in 1982 also had above average durations of unemployment, accentuating the overall differences between groups. Blue-collar workers

comprised 31 percent of the labor force, but incurred 46 percent of total unemployment and 52 percent of the total weeks of unemployment. White-collar workers accounted for 51 percent of the labor force, but 26 percent of the total unemployed and 25 percent of total weeks of unemployment. On an industry basis, construction and durable goods manufacturing were hardest hit, suffering above-average durations of unemployment in addition to their above-average unemployment rates.

TABLE 4.—MEASURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION, 1982

Occupation	Civilian unemployment rate (percent)	Civilian labor force (millions)	Number unemployed (millions)	Mean duration of unemployment (weeks)	Total weeks of unemployment (millions)	Group percentage of total		
						Civilian labor force	Number unemployed	Total weeks of unemployment
White-collar workers	4.9	56.159	2.767	14.8	41.0	51	26	25
Professional and managerial	3.4	29.459	0.996	15.8	15.7	27	9	9
Sales workers	5.6	6.929	0.388	14.7	5.7	6	4	3
Clerical workers	7.0	19.771	1.384	14.0	19.4	18	13	12
Blue-collar workers	14.2	34.561	4.904	17.5	85.8	31	46	52
Craft and kindred workers	10.2	13.696	1.397	16.8	23.5	12	13	14
Operatives, except transport	17.7	11.486	2.033	17.2	35.0	10	19	21
Transport equipment operatives	11.7	3.838	0.449	19.7	8.8	3	4	5
Nonfarm laborers	18.5	5.541	1.025	17.9	18.3	5	10	11
Service workers	10.6	15.340	1.626	14.3	23.3	14	15	14
Not elsewhere classified [1]	33.3	4.144	1.381	11.9	16.5	4	13	10
Total	9.7	110.204	10.678	15.6	166.6	100	100	100

[1] These figures were estimated as a residual, thus they may not be accurate.

TABLE 5.—MEASURES OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, 1982

Industry [1]	Civilian unemployment rate (percent)	Civilian labor force (millions)	Number unemployed (millions)	Mean duration of unemployment (weeks)	Total weeks of unemployment (millions)	Group percentage of total		
						Civilian labor force	Number unemployed	Total weeks of unemployment
Agriculture	14.7	1.769	0.260	11.3	2.9	2	2	2
Construction	20.0	5.325	1.065	16.3	17.4	5	10	10
Manufacturing	12.3	22.594	2.777	18.1	50.3	21	26	30
Durable goods	13.3	13.474	1.792	19.2	34.4	12	17	21
Nondurable goods	10.8	9.120	0.985	16.0	15.8	8	9	9
Transportation and public utilities	6.8	6.500	0.442	18.2	8.0	6	4	5
Wholesale and retail trade	10.0	20.770	2.077	14.0	29.1	19	19	17
Finance and service industries	6.9	32.478	2.241	15.0	33.6	29	21	20
No previous work experience	11.1	10.721	1.190	12.5	14.9	10	11	9
Not elsewhere classified [2]	6.2	10.047	0.626	16.6	10.4	9	6	6
Total	9.7	110.204	10.678	15.6	166.6	100	100	100

[1] Wage and salary workers only.
[2] These figures were estimated as a residual, thus they may not be accurate.

Overall, racial, sexual, occupational, and industrial differences in unemployment rates were exacerbated by differences in the mean durations of unemployment in 1982. However, differences between age groups in unemployment rates were offset to some degree by differences in the average length of unemployment.

Duration of Unemployment

Monthly unemployment information is obtained from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) of approximately 60,000 households. Respondents to this survey are asked about the length of time each unemployed person in the household has been out of work. This information is summarized by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in categories of 1-4 weeks, 5-10 weeks, 11-14 weeks, 15-26 weeks, 27-51 weeks, and 52 or more weeks, and is presented (on a seasonally unadjusted basis) for May 1983 in Table 6.[3] The estimated mean duration of unemployment for each group has been used to obtain the distribution of total weeks of unemployment by duration of unemployment.

TABLE 6.—NUMBER UNEMPLOYED AND TOTAL WEEKS OF UNEMPLOYMENT, BY DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT, MAY 1983

[Not seasonally adjusted]

Weeks of unemployment	Number unemployed (millions)	Mean duration of unemployment [1] (weeks)	Total weeks of unemployment (millions)	Group percentage of total	
				Number unemployed	Total weeks of unemployment
1 to 4	3.368	2.2	7.410	31	3
5 to 10	1.717	7.0	12.019	16	5
11 to 14	0.735	12.3	9.041	7	4
15 to 26	1.979	19.5	38.591	18	16
27 to 51	1.418	36.0	51.048	13	22
52 and over	1.548	75.3	116.568	14	50
Total	10.765	21.8	234.677	100	100

[1] By interpolation for the first 5 classes. The mean duration for the sixth class (52+) was found by dividing total weeks of unemployment for this group (calculated as the residual by subtracting the sum of total weeks for the first 5 classes from the total) by the number unemployed in this group.

[3] Information for these 6 categories is published only for annual data since 1967 and for unadjusted monthly data. For the seasonally adjusted monthly data, all quarterly data, and annual data before 1967, the 5-10 week and 11-14 week categories are combined, as are the 27-51 week and 52+ week categories, thus yielding 4 classes: 1-4 weeks, 5-14 weeks, 15-26 weeks, and 27+ weeks.

In May 1983, 31 percent of the unemployed were out of work for 4 weeks or less, but they accounted for only an estimated 3 percent of total weeks of unemployment. At the other end of the distribution, 14 percent of the unemployed were out of work for 52 weeks or longer, but they accounted for 50 percent of total weeks of unemployment. In May, 27 percent of the unemployed were out of work for 6 months or more, but this group bore 72 percent of the labor market distress, as measured by total weeks of unemployment.

Cyclical Record

The number unemployed and the mean duration of unemployment both rise in periods of weak economic activity—the correlation coefficient between the average annual values of these two components of this index for 1948–82 is 0.61. Because this index is the product of two positively correlated series, it is subject to more cyclical variability than either component, as may be shown by comparing the respective coefficients of variation.[4]

This measure, total weeks of unemployment, has been calculated on a monthly basis back to 1948. The Bureau of Economic Analysis classifies the number unemployed as a leading indicator at cyclical peaks and a lagging indicator at troughs. The mean duration of unemployment is a lagging indicator at both peaks and troughs.[5] This implies that the product of these two series should be a lagging indicator at recession troughs. This expectation is borne out—the index reached its maximum on average 5.6 months after the recession troughs for the seven recessions since 1948 (excluding the recession which began in July 1981). This pattern appears to have continued in 1982–83, with the recession trough in November or December 1982, and total weeks of unemployment probably reaching a peak in May 1983. At cyclical peaks the leading indicator characteristics of the number unemployed more than offset the lagging indicator characteristics of the mean duration of unemployment; on balance the index has a mean lead time of 3.4 months.

Related Measures

Other studies have discussed additional measures of underutilization of labor.[6] One measure, labor force time lost, was recommended by the Joint Economic Committee in 1955, and has been published monthly by BLS since 1962. This indicator is expressed as a percentage of potentially available aggregate hours. It is computed by assuming that unemployed persons looking for full-time work lost an average of 37.5 hours; that those looking for part-time work lost the average number of hours actually worked by voluntary part-time workers during the survey week; and that persons on part time for economic reasons lost the difference between 37.5 hours and the actual number of hours they worked. The assump-

---

[4] The coefficient of variation is the standard deviation divided by the mean. This measure has a value of 0.46 for the number unemployed, 0.20 for the mean duration of unemployment, and 0.61 for the total weeks of unemployment.

[5] *Business Conditions Digest,* April 1983, p. 62.

[6] Several measures are discussed in Curtis L. Gilroy, "Supplemental measures of labor force underutilization," *Monthly Labor Review,* May 1975, pp. 13–23.

tion that the unemployed looking for full-time work lost 37.5 hours of work has been criticized as being too low, but this charge has less validity today, with the trend toward a shorter work week.

A second set of measures involves three adjustments to express employment, unemployment, and unemployment rates on a "full-time equivalent" basis. The first adjustment weights part-time workers and the unemployed seeking part-time work by the ratio of average weekly hours of workers on part-time schedules to average weekly hours of workers on full-time schedules. This would yield an unemployment rate slightly below the offical rate, because the unemployment rate among part-time workers, which receives less weight in this measure, is greater than the unemployment rate for full-time workers. The second adjustment, recommended in 1955 by the Joint Economic Committee, has now been incorporated into the alternative unemployment measure U–6, published monthly by BLS. It counts workers on part time for economic reasons as partially employed and partially unemployed. It is somewhat similar to the labor force time lost measure, but one author believes that "the joint impact of unemployment and involuntary part-time unemployment is estimated in a more comprehensive manner than in . ... the labor force time lost measure."[7] This adjustment yields a significantly higher unemployment rate—in May 1983 measure U–6 was 12.9 percent, in comparison with the official civilian unemployment rate of 10.1 percent. The third adjustment adds discouraged workers to the number unemployed and under-employed, and is now reported quarterly by BLS as alternative unemployment measure U–7. It yields the highest unemployment rate—15.0 percent in the first quarter of 1983, compared with the official civilian rate of 10.3 percent.

A third measure was developed by Geoffrey Moore.[8] It comes closest to the index analyzed above. Moore proposed multiplying the unemployment rate by the mean duration of unemployment—this is equivalent to division of total weeks of unemployment by the size of the labor force. For 1982 this calculation yields 1.5 weeks, or 7.6 days. This index shows that if average unemployment during the year were distributed evenly among all persons in the labor force, each worker would have been jobless for 7.6 days.[9]

Conclusion

The usual indicators of unemployment—the unemployment rate, the number unemployed, the average length of unemployment—consider one dimension of the problem at a time. Total weeks of unemployment, the product of the number unemployed and the mean duration of unemployment, is a measure of labor market distress which combines two of these dimensions. This new index more accurately measures the cyclical deterioration in our employ-

---

[7] Gilroy, p. 17.

[8] Geoffrey H. Moore, "How Full Is Full Employment," American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1973, pp. 17–22.

[9] The measure proposed in this study, total weeks of unemployment, intentionally does not adjust for the size of the labor force. Such an adjustment complicates the measure, makes it more difficult to interpret, and does not measure aggregate labor market distress as well. The unemployed find little or no comfort in the fact that there are many employed in today's large labor force.

ment situation, and it provides a basis for comparing the relative shares of labor market distress borne by various demographic and economic groups of workers.

○